

# Surviving, Healing and Evolving:

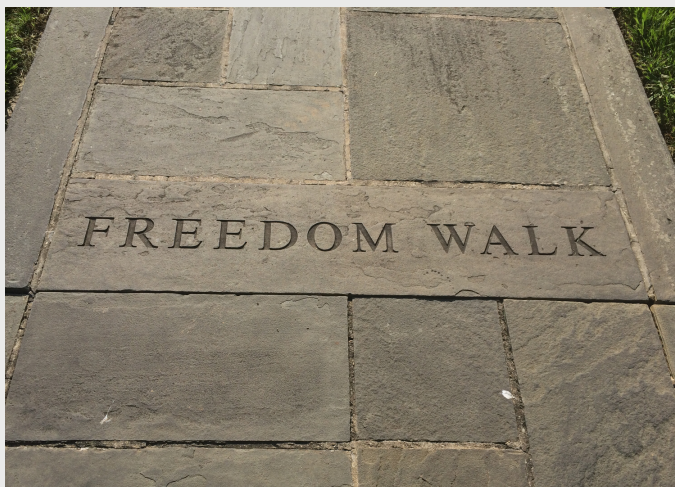
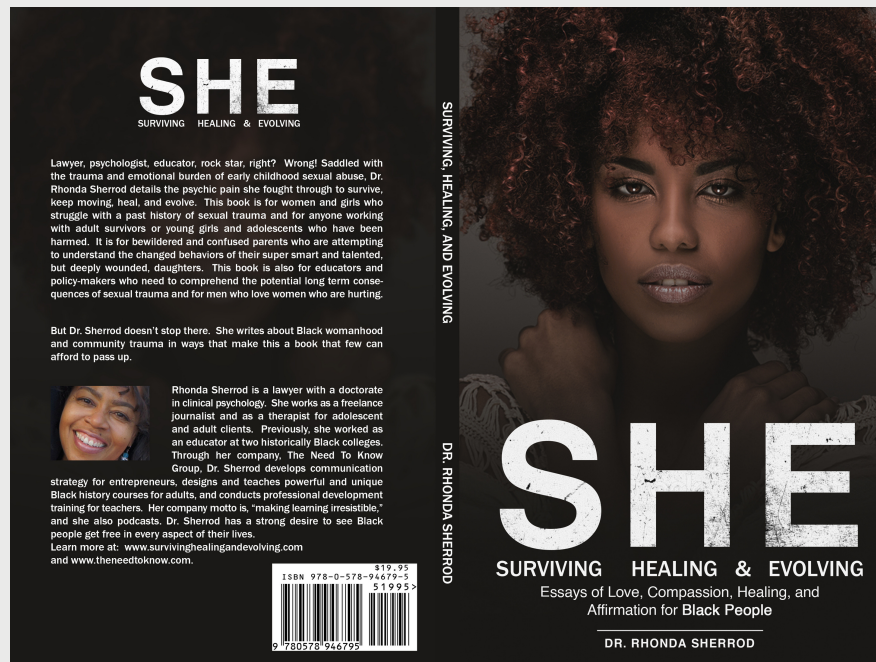
## Essays of Love, Compassion, Healing and Affirmation for Black People

*Epistles for Black Women and Girls*  
*It's also a book about community trauma*

Dr. Rhonda Sherrod has written a compelling collection of beautiful essays addressing some of the understated pain in the Black community, especially as it relates to women and girls. A survivor of childhood sexual abuse, and a voracious reader with an unquenchable yearning for knowledge, this is the book she wishes someone had presented to her in the midst of her emotional suffering and struggles. After scouring book stores and library shelves for literature about sexual assault, psychic pain, and diminished self-esteem, as well as community and social ills that Black women must navigate—from the perspective of a Black woman—to no avail, she wrote the book herself! Exploring many themes, including anxiety, depression, food as comfort, and avoidance behaviors, Dr. Sherrod invites the wounded reader to finally begin the healing journey towards freedom and joy.

*"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."*

Toni Morrison



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## Quick Facts

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# Excerpt

"I first understood rape conceptualized as a "breaking into" some years ago when I read an interview with the brilliant "womanist" writer and prize-winning author, Alice Walker. She talked in terms of men and boys "breaking into" girls' and women's bodies. The idea resonated, immediately. Alice Walker! Sage that she is, helped me find the language that powerfully conveys what I felt all those years. Broken into. She helped me develop a framework for this perversion, for this act that was so harmfully invasive.

As I pondered it further, however, the concept of a home invasion seemed even more precise. In a house where there is a home invasion, the owner/occupant is present. Sadly, many occupants who survive such a crime never, ever really feel at home again. The sense of sanctuary and security they once felt inside that house is now greatly diminished, if not completely gone. The house is no longer a home, a safe haven, a castle in which one feels blessedly away from danger.

**"Sometimes occupants of an invaded home simply move out. The traumatic event and the memories of it are too painful to stay. I fully occupied my body until someone did the unthinkable, but, unlike residents of a home, I could not pack up and move away."**

"Yet, functionally, to extend the metaphor, I had been evicted from myself. No longer able to feel secure and comfortable in my own body, it was as if my house—my temple—became frightening and I slowly abandoned it. Ultimately, I foreclosed on it. So many of the things that made "me" authentic to myself, that allowed me to move in the world in my own special way, were lost. There I was, a beautiful house (on the outside), but everything that made the house a home was amiss. The furniture was tousled about; things were askew, disarranged, busted, amiss—broken.

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*Afterthought: It Never "Goes Away."*

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Eventually, of course, the electricity is turned off in an empty abandoned house, just as it went out in my soul. The current that makes life crackle with possibility, and sparkle with activity, was short-circuited for a very, very long time. The sense of being alive, and of feeling fully charged, that spark that one needs in order to be confident, to feel secure, to feel assured in the face of challenge, was gone.

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"Whatever light there was left in my spirit radiated nowhere because it was so hard to find. The "windows to my soul" seemed to have "dark out" shades pulled down, and no solar power seemed accessible. So, I was in the dark throughout my childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. I stumbled often.

From: "Paradise Lost" in

*Surviving, Healing, and Evolving: Essays of Love, Compassion, Healing, and Affirmation for Black People* ©

Lawyer, psychologist, educator, rock star, right? Wrong! Saddled with the trauma and emotional burden of early childhood sexual abuse, Dr. Rhonda Sherrod details the psychic pain she fought through to survive, keep moving, heal, and evolve. This book is for women and girls who struggle with a past history of sexual trauma and for anyone working with adult survivors or young girls and adolescents who have been harmed. It is for bewildered and confused parents who are attempting to understand the changed behaviors of their super smart and talented, but deeply wounded, daughters. This book is also for educators and policy-makers who need to comprehend the potential long term consequences of sexual trauma and for men who love women who are hurting.

But Dr. Sherrod doesn't stop there. She writes about Black womanhood and community trauma in ways that make this a book that few can afford to pass up.



Rhonda Sherrod is a lawyer with a doctorate in clinical psychology. She works as a freelance journalist and as a therapist for adolescent and adult clients. Previously, she worked as an educator at two historically Black colleges. Through her company, The Need To Know Group, Dr. Sherrod develops communication

strategy for entrepreneurs, designs and teaches powerful and unique Black history courses for adults, and conducts professional development training for teachers. Her company motto is, "making learning irresistible," and she also podcasts. Dr. Sherrod has a strong desire to see Black people get free in every aspect of their lives.

Learn more at: [www.survivinghealingandevolving.com](http://www.survivinghealingandevolving.com) and [www.theneedtoknow.com](http://www.theneedtoknow.com)

# SHE

## Biography

Dr. Rhonda Sherrod attended public schools in the western suburbs of Chicago. She has an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Alabama, a master's degree in English from Chicago State University, and a law degree from the University of Texas. After practicing law several years, she matriculated at Jackson State University where she had her doctorate conferred in clinical psychology. A licensed psychologist, Dr. Sherrod completed her pre-doctoral internship at Harvard Medical School before serving as a clinical fellow at Harvard. She has also completed liberal arts graduate classes at the University of Chicago and the Harvard University Extension School.

**A passionate educator and sought after public speaker, Dr. Sherrod taught undergraduate and graduate psychology at two HBCUs. She is now the president of *The Need To Know Group* where she conducts professional development trainings for educators, devises communication strategies for entrepreneurs, and creates and delivers enlightening classes on the history of Blacks all over the world for private clients.**

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# For Immediate Release

*Surviving, Healing and Evolving:  
Essays of Love, Compassion, Healing, and Affirmation for  
Black People*

(Chicago, Illinois, January 15, 2022) With her first book, Rhonda Sherrod delivers a stunning collection of essays addressing some of the trauma affecting Black communities. From sexual trauma experienced by bewildered Black girls—and the potential lifelong after effects, including low self-esteem, damaged confidence, and perfectionism—to colorism, vicious stereotypes, gun violence in the community, and the collective grief felt after the loss of great figures like Fred Hampton and Harold Washington, Dr. Sherrod tackles topics rarely discussed. She also addresses the taboo topic of therapy and why it can be crucial to wellness. With the understanding that good health is more than the absence of illness, and with a desire to promote overall wellness—heart, mind, body, and soul, Dr. Sherrod, a psychologist and lawyer, writes with arresting honesty about her own struggles after surviving childhood sexual abuse.

**A powerful and eclectic collection of essays, this book is about Black women and healing. It covers the harm sustained as a result of various forms of physical and psychological violence, as well as the multiplicity of ways survivors then go on to commit acts of self-sabotage, which is often undergirded by a form of perfectionism that develops to compensate for the manner in which they feel damaged.**

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# Interview Questions

## **What is this book about?**

The book is about loss, trauma, and proper recognition of pain and suffering. It is about how psychic pain, when unattended to, can cause one to spiral and grossly underachieve. Conversely, many Black people have found a way to accomplish great things while grinding, combating, and fighting through indescribable pain. But why? Members of my community who are hurting deserve the relief and liberation that can come with access to therapeutic services and outlets. I wrote the book for those who look good on the outside but who suffer on the inside in silence.

## **Exactly who is your intended audience?**

While employed as a college educator, I began blogging about healing, I was writing to and for Black women. But so many Black men back channeled me saying, "I know you said this is for Black women, but I find these writings healing and thought-provoking, too." Then women of other racial backgrounds contacted me to say that they found my work enlightening. So, I now say it is a book written for Black women, girls, and adolescents, and the people who love them, but it's universal enough for everyone to find it illuminating and nourishing.

## **What topics are addressed and what inspired you to write this book?**

The book is divided into three sections: For Myself, For My Sisters, and For My Community. The first section, which begins with an essay called "Paradise Lost," examines my own history of childhood sexual abuse and the emotional suffering that ensued. The second section is devoted to subjects that all Black women potentially have to navigate including parental conflict, unhealthy relationships with food, and the need for fierce self-love in a society that likes to devalue all women but, especially, Black women. For My Sisters also has thirty-one meditations for women who have been sexually exploited. The last section is about community trauma like the stereotypes that Black men have to navigate and that are, ultimately, destructive to the whole community.

My inspiration is simple: I want to see Black people thrive and bask in the fullness of their beautiful selves. So, much potential is lost under both the interpersonal assaults that people of all races endure and the weight of systemic injustices. So, for Black women and girls, there is often a land mine of jeopardy to hopscotch. Hopefully, this book will be a gift to them.